

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR"

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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A STERN CHASE.

A STORY IN THREE PARTS.

BY MRS. CASHEL HOEY.

THE SECOND PART.

CHAPTER X. THE SIXTH OF MAY.

THE lark was springing from the sod on Hampstead Heath as freely, and pouring out its morning song in mid-air as joyfully, as though within ever so far of its low-lying nest there were no miles of brick and mortar, and no thousands of weary feet to tramp through their length. The young leaves clothed the trees in their livery of green and silver with quite a countrified luxuriance, unheeding the neighbourhood of "blacks"; and the glorious sun of early summer got fair play over the wide and beautiful expanse, which had not yet suffered severely from the encroachments of avaricious speculation. The very nearness of the great city added a charm to the loveliness of the scene, by impressing the imagination and deepening the sense of rest.

On the broad road that leads across the Heath not a figure was visible; down on the Heath itself there were more signs of life. Here was an artist with his camp-stool and his sketch-book; there a student, seated on a tussock, or lying, propped up on his elbows, on the grass, reading; at one place a group of children at play; at another a donkey-party. But these were all scattered far and wide, and the solitary figure of a lady, seated on a little ridge, some way below the level of the road, looked as lonely as if only it broke the still-life character of the scene.

The lady, who had chosen a spot from whence she could see to a great distance, had been gazing at the landscape and the sky—so high and clear, for all the canopy of

smoke beneath that altitude—with the intentness of a lover and student of the face of the earth and the glory of the heavens. She had remained in the same place for a full hour, only moving once, when an artist, carrying his apparatus and prospecting for a point of view, came near.

A book, with a glove between its leaves, lies on the grass at her side, but she does not take it up until just before she leaves the spot to wend her way homewards; and she carries it unopened, while her face wears the intent expression of an uninterrupted train of thought. She is a fair woman, though not beautiful; her face is grave, serene, and sweet; the brown eyes are soft and lustrous; the dark-brown hair is glossy and abundant. She possesses the supreme charm of refinement; in all her ways, and words, and looks it reigns; in her gait and carriage, and in her clear and gentle voice. Pure womanliness, wide intelligence, and a spirit kept in the unbending discipline of right, may be read by all who look at her. She is rather tall, of a light and graceful figure, and she fully looks her age, which is quite six-and-twenty, for seven years have passed since we last saw Lillias Merivale.

She has not far to walk; her home is hard by. It is a roomy old house, built of red brick, mellowed now by the hand of time into a rich rusty tint, with which the greens of the profuse foliage blend harmoniously. It stands in a large, well-cultivated garden, enclosed with high, ivy-clad walls. It is a sunny old house although those walls shut in some fine umbrageous trees—among them two noble cedars of local celebrity—for its exposure is to the south-west, and, although it was built in the days when the light of heaven was taxed, it had been windowed without regard to that fiscal extortion, and the

western sun of afternoon illuminates the garden-front gorgeously. Four quaintly-cut, pyramid-shaped yews bound the velvet lawn at its four corners, and an open stone balustrade and flat terrace of red brick divide it from the house. The place is shut in by a lofty iron gate, with the coat-of-arms of the original proprietor in the middle, and, as it occupies an isolated position on the border of the Heath, it is as retired and secluded a residence as can be desired. Liliás loves it; but sometimes she feels its four encircling walls oppressive, and then she likes to resort to the wide and airy Heath, with its spreading prospect, and the contrast of its quiet with the suggested roar and stir of vast and busy life beyond.

The gate was opened to give egress to an empty cab, as Liliás came up to it, and on the doorstep, under the old-fashioned glazed porch, stood a lady, who came down the laurel-bordered avenue to meet her.

"Dear Madame Isambard, how good of you to come!" said Liliás; "I thought you would manage it somehow."

"It was 'somehow', but here I am, and here I stay until Monday. I think the house and the garden look prettier and more peaceful than ever. Have you been on the Heath?"

"Yes. It is fresh and delightful there to-day."

These two were evidently friends, well used to each other's ways, and in the habit of companionship. They entered the house together.

Through the chances and changes that had befallen Liliás Merivale in the seven years' interval over which this story has passed in silence, the tie that bound her to Madame Isambard, her former instructor and constant friend, had remained unbroken. The prosperous teacher of music had gone on prospering, until the time had nearly come when she might take her rest; but she had never been too busy to help and counsel Liliás, and the interest with which her former pupil had inspired her was as vivid as ever. That interest was not unmixed with speculation; for Madame Isambard knew the world very well, and was aware that a young and attractive woman, possessed of a fortune large enough to enable her to live in a handsome house in a refined and liberal style, and to do a great deal of good in a practical and systematic way, but in whose life no love-story, either prosperous or

unhappy, had a place, was an exceptional person. On this strange feature in the case of her friend, Madame Isambard meditated much, for she was of a romantic turn of mind, and had herself made a love-match, of which she had never repented. She was, however, obliged to be convinced that the one great interest in life, the one feeling that redeems existence from the commonplace, was wanting here—that it had never existed; and that, as she expressed it to herself, "somewhere or other there was a man who had missed the best and sweetest wife in the world." If anyone had spoken of Liliás Merivale to Madame Isambard as a potential "old maid", she would have received the remark with angry contempt; nevertheless she had said to herself, more than once: "I am really afraid she will never marry. All that trouble, while she was quite young, has made her so unlike other people."

More persons than Madame Isambard thought that if Liliás was unlike other people, so much the worse for the other people; but for a rich young lady, perfectly free from control, she had little experience of the kind that generally attends a condition which people of the selfish and heartless kind would regard as eminently lucky. There was about Liliás something discouraging to that class of man who used to be called a fortune-hunter, but of whom it is now said, "so-and-so must marry money, you know." Perhaps her air of calm good sense made it vain to hope that she could be deceived with regard to motives. Perhaps, also, the absence of vanity from her composition made her a difficult person to impress, because it rendered flattery unavailing. From these and other cognate reasons, and also because she had always been entirely fancy-free herself, Liliás Merivale, at twenty-six, inspired Madame Isambard with serious misgiving, and her own would-be admirers with despair. As it seems to be a law of society, if not of nature, that when a woman is in what the world regards as an exceptionally favourable position, her own object, and that of all concerned with her, must be to change it as soon as possible, there had been a good deal of experimenting in that direction; but it had proved abortive, and it had passed almost unnoticed by Liliás herself.

The seven years' interval had changed Liliás in certain respects. She had emerged from the narrowness of her former life, but without the loss of simplicity. Her

intellect had gained in strength and culture, and her manner in ease. She had never been afflicted with self-consciousness, because she was rarely occupied with herself; but the reserve, timidity, and restraint which had formerly characterised her no longer existed. She was changed in looks also, and for the better. No eyes, that could discern the spirit in the features, failed to rest with pleasure on the serenity and refinement of her face. Lillas did not appear to be any younger than her years, and the touch of gravity and purpose in her manner, the clear sweetness of her rather slow speech, became her prime of womanhood well.

"You have heard, no doubt," said Madame Isambard, when the two ladies were alone after luncheon, "that your convalescent cottage is again vacant?"

"Yes," replied Lillas. "I had a few lines from Mrs. Courtland this morning, telling me of Mrs. Willesden's sudden death, and promising further particulars. She mentioned that she had written a line to you, or I should have done so, and, if you had not come to me to-day, I would have sent on her note. Your poor protégée did not last very long; the case must have been worse than you thought it. That everything was done for her I am quite satisfied. Mrs. Courtland has often told me how much attached to poor Mrs. Willesden she had become."

"She was a most interesting person. I am sorry you never saw her. She knew you very well by description, although not as her benefactor. I always observed your wishes in that respect."

"Thank you for doing so. I, too, regret that I never saw this poor lady. Indeed I know I am guilty of a weakness with respect to Lisle, and only this morning I have been arguing the point with myself, and trying to make up my mind to go there. My shrinking from it is self-indulgence after all, or perhaps something still more wrong. You know the story of the rebuke of the Quaker to the woman, whom time had failed to comfort for the loss of her child. Well, it was a rough speech, but I am sometimes afraid it applies to me; there are certain things which I find it so unreasonably difficult to do."

"That is because your feelings are exceptionally tenacious, and your nerves very sensitive. I don't think you need be hard upon yourself on that point. You sustained

a great shock at Lisle, coming after illness and suspense. It is natural enough that, with your disposition, you should shrink from the place."

"You judge my weakness mercifully. Yes, there is that excuse for me, and also another. I had set hopes on Lisle, and dreamed dreams which had their local habitation there. I think the pain of the unreal loss is as fresh in my memory as what actually happened. How vividly it came back yesterday when I read Mrs. Courtland's note! At the mention of the cottage, I could see myself, all those years ago, when I first went over the house, catching sight of the cottage from the garden-gate, and settling in my own mind that I would live there, and that Hugh and his wife should have Lisle."

"You turned the frustration of your dream to 'sweet uses', Lillas, and you ought to take comfort out of that."

"So I do," said Lillas, with her old sweet smile; "but yet it is of the sad sort. This poor lady was young—younger than I am, was she not?"

"Yes, only four-and-twenty. It was her youth which gave me such good hope of her recovery, when you enabled me to rescue her from poverty and neglect, by sending her to the cottage; but, no doubt, those had effectually done their work, and it was too late. It was a sad story, the little I knew of it. I am not sure whether we ought to regard the end of it as sad."

"Perhaps not—only there is the child to be thought of. I will let you see Mrs. Courtland's note now."

"These are almost the same words which Mrs. Courtland wrote to me," said Madame Isambard; "but she added that they would happily escape an inquest, the doctor being able to certify to the cause of death. They have been wonderfully kind. What good fortune it was that you should have found such people to carry out your plan!"

"It all turned on that. My share in it is only a subsidy in money; they have all the trouble and responsibility. Hitherto, our poor tenants have been real convalescents, and have gone away in restored health. This is the first death. They will feel it quite as a personal grief, and I know they take a great interest in the little girl."

"She is a lovely child; the image, I am sure, of what her mother must have been; with large dark eyes, and a beautifully-shaped face. I dare say she is strong and well enough now; children pull up so

rapidly ; but she was a fragile little creature when I first found them out in the wretched garret in Bloomsbury, where Mrs. Willesden was toiling her life out at her embroidery-frame."

"I wish I had not been away when you did find her. If I had been in town I should have seen her then."

"That was not the only time I had known some good come of a fine lady's fancy. If pretty Mrs. Halliday Vere had not been bent on eclipsing all the other brides of the season by the embroidery on her Court petticoat, and if she had not insisted on taking me to the dressmaker's to see the masterpiece, the tale which has finished so sadly would have had a worse ending."

"Mrs. Halliday Vere was a pupil of yours?"

"Was, and is. She is a person not strange to me, but who would be to you incomprehensible. Supreme vanity, and all-absorbing selfishness, do not come under your notice so often as they come under mine. She is an example of both. If she had as little head as she has heart, I think she would be a pleasanter specimen of womanhood. But she is clever in a way, and she is resolutely determined to impose her talents on society, together with her 'smart' good looks, her vast fortune, and her vulgar husband. The affair of the embroidery for her petticoat was characteristic: she has china and glass designed especially, and table-linen made of a pattern exclusively reserved for her. She questioned the dressmaker so pertinaciously about the embroidery, for which she was to pay enormously, that she forced her at last to tell how she came by it. The woman was unwilling, for, of course, she paid starvation and charged ruination prices for the work, and wanted to keep the worker to herself; but Mrs. Halliday Vere is a valuable customer, and so she made her understand that if she did not give the name and address she would lose her. The scene amused me not a little, so did the perplexity of Mrs. Halliday Vere's coachman when he had to find the back street in Bloomsbury; for as we came down to the carriage, she had said eagerly: 'I'll go to the woman, and buy up everything she has ready, and give her such a big order that she can't work for anyone else for as long as I shall care to wear that kind of thing.' We found the street, the house, the garret, and the woman who did that wonderful work. A breadth of the thick, cream-silk petticoat was stretched

upon the work-frame, and a vine-tendrill was forming itself under the hand of the worker. In a corner of the clean, bare room a child was quietly at play with some poor toys. At a glance I perceived that the person we had come to see was a lady; her accent and her face told me that she was not an Englishwoman. She looked so frightfully ill, that even Mrs. Halliday Vere was taken aback for a moment; but she soon got over it, and began to explain her visit, and to make her bargain. I stood by and said nothing. It seemed that the petticoat was the only thing Mrs. Willesden had in hand just then, and I saw by her change of colour, when Mrs. Halliday Vere spoke of the price of it, that my guess as to the scale on which she was paid had been correct. She accepted with thankfulness the orders which Mrs. Halliday Vere gave her, and I remember well the involuntary glance she directed to the work-frame while I was asking a few questions about her health, as though she grudged every moment taken from her work. As we came out of the house we met a decent-looking woman on the doorstep, and I was fortunately impelled to ask her if she knew Mrs. Willesden, and could inform me whether any doctor attended her. I need not tell you any more, my dear Lillias, for what I then learned was the first cause of my writing to you, and of your ready and generous help."

"You went back there the same evening, did you not?"

"Yes; but I am bound to say, having given you a candid sketch of her, that I went so promptly on account of a good deed of Mrs. Halliday Vere's. Of course, we talked of the poor woman we had seen, and I said I was sure she would work far beyond her strength to finish her stipulated task for the dressmaker, and be free to earn the liberal pay she was now offered. 'Oh, but she mustn't do that,' said Mrs. Halliday Vere; 'the petticoat's mine any way, and I don't at all mind giving her five pounds in advance.' In short, I went back to Bloomsbury the same evening, took the five pounds to Mrs. Willesden, learned as much of her story as you already know, became more and more interested in her, and finally appealed to you on her behalf, with the success that usually attends my doing so."

"It is a comfort to know that she had at least peace and care for the last few months of her short life. The news of her death came to me on a day which is parti-

cularly marked in my year. This is the 6th of May—Hugh's last letter was written on that day, and for a long time I believed in my secret heart that news of him would come to me on a 6th of May."

"News? Did you still cherish hope, then, after all the enquiries failed?"

"Not of his life; not that I should ever see him again in this world; but that some certain knowledge of his fate would be granted me. Of all things that can befall human beings, I had imagined ignorance of the fate of one much beloved the worst, and often pictured to myself the horrid agony of suspense that is implied in a disappearance. How weak was my fancy in comparison with the reality—with my experience! I think, if I had only known all; if the sharp truth, that Hugh was dead, had been told me at Lisle, and I had been obliged to bear it and rally from it as other people have to bear and rally from blows as hard; I could have gone back there, when papa died, and made the place my home. But it was the horrible not-knowing, the slow passing of time without anything to mark it, the no-tidings, the dead sameness of day after day, until at last we settled down into the belief that the solution of the mystery which the Colonel found in Mr. Ritchie's report was the true one; and so drifted into the silence of despair. It was then that the horror of the place seized upon me, and it holds me still; not now in so close a grip, however, but that I could will to shake it off. But, as I was saying, for three or four years I looked with faith as strong as it was unreasonable for some news of Hugh—a rift in the darkness that had swallowed him up, a link with him of any kind that should take away even a little of the awfulness of that black and sudden chasm which had opened at my feet. I formed the wildest, the most foolish notions of what its nature might be, but I did look for something of the kind, and for its coming on the 6th of May! Madame Isambard, do you think me a superstitious visionary, when I say that I have not yet learned to live without the expectation that some day I shall have news of Hugh?"

"No, I don't; but still I am sorry it should be so; for it must be always a cause of nervous excitement to you—something to disturb your peace, and I cannot see any source from which a communication could possibly come, unless, indeed, it were a supernatural one."

"Nor do I; yet the idea recurs to me.

Sometimes I have thought it possible that the mulatto boatman might commit some other crime, and, being convicted of it, might confess that he had killed Hugh and thrown him into the sea, for the sake of the things that were in his bag; and there would be someone merciful enough to make the confession known in England, and thus it might reach me."

"You have always accepted that explanation?" asked Madame Isambard.

"Yes," said Lillas, looking earnestly at her friend. "Have you ever doubted it?"

"I cannot exactly tell. No other solution has presented itself to me; yet there is the one great difficulty, that the idea did not occur to the persons concerned in the investigation."

"But we don't know that. Colonel Courtland has little doubt that it did; but he thinks they agreed to make no suggestion of the kind, as it would be very difficult to find the mulatto, and impossible to prove the crime."

"Then what was Mr. Ritchie's own supposition?"

"Certainly not that the mulatto had done this dreadful thing. He had never thought of it until Colonel Courtland suggested it to him after his return. I believe his clearest notion was that Hugh had gone on foot far into the country, and died of sunstroke, or from some accident; but papa and Colonel Courtland were convinced that, had this been so, the fact would have been made known in the towns, especially as a large reward was offered for information, and notices were distributed throughout the island."

"I suppose you were all satisfied at the time with the capacity of the agent who was employed?"

"Yes; I think so."

"Lillas," said Madame Isambard very gravely, "I wish you would promise me to put this vague expectation quite away from you. Depend upon it, a greater influence than you have any consciousness of is exerted over your life by still clinging to it. Just think! It is seven years since the calamity occurred; and what is this but prolonging, in a sense, the suspense of a bygone time. As for that suspense, it was only wonderful it did not kill you."

"As it did kill papa," said Lillas, her eyes filling with sudden tears. "Ah yes, I know," she continued, noticing the gesture of remonstrance and dissent made by

Madame Isambard; "you don't agree with me, because he soon left off speaking of Hugh, and because he survived it all so long. But I knew papa better than anyone knew him—far better than ever Hugh did—and I knew his way of being occupied with one subject of which he never lost sight, while all the time he went about his work as usual. From the time he lost my mother that loss was never out of his mind; from the time that he lost Hugh he was never again the same man. After a while he ceased to speak of him. When he bought this place, and we moved out here, he gave up his old friends and his old ways. I knew the end was not far off, and that he would not be sorry when it came. I don't think he would have taken it so much to heart if Hugh had died at home with us, and we had been quite sure about him."

"Or," thought Madame Isambard, "if he had made more of his son while he was with him."

"And I don't think papa made any fight for it, as he used to say of his own patients."

"Well, well, my dear, I must not let you talk any longer on sad subjects. Let us have some music."

When Madame Isambard came down to breakfast on the following morning, Lillas met her with some discomposure of countenance.

"Here," she said, "is Mrs. Courtland's promised letter. What do you think has happened? The very day after Mrs. Willesden's death, her husband turned up, and he claims the child."

LIBERTY, EQUALITY, FRATERNITY.

THE French change strangely in their notions about men and things. Some fifty years ago the first Napoleon was an idol, with every Frenchman of genius for his priest. Thiers told in glowing prose the legend of his wonderful doings. Béranger and Victor Hugo extolled him in immortal verse. And they all wrote and talked to such good purpose that "le petit" stepped, as of right, into his uncle's boots, and a plébiscite, or counting of heads, set him, twice over, triumphantly at the top of the French political ladder. And then, about the time of the Mexican war, when they had found out, rather late, that Napoleon the Third was not always successful, the "Great

Nation" began to have its doubts about Napoleon the First; and straightway Lanfrey, Quinet, and half-a-dozen more, set to work to pull "the Napoleon legend" to pieces, and to show that the idol whom men had accepted as gold, with perhaps a little clay in his feet, was nothing but clay from top to toe, and withal so imperfectly gilded as to deceive none but the willingly blind. So said the men of thought; and nearly all France faced round and accepted their dictum, the practical result being—for, again, the talk did tell practically—that the late Emperor thought he must play his last trump-card by going to war in 1870, and had to give up the game when the fortune of war went against him.

The change, in regard to the old Revolution, has not been quite so universal. There are thousands of Frenchmen and women who honestly believe what Erckmann-Châtريان teach in all those pleasant novels, viz., that the old system was rotten, and that the change did immense good—was an unspeakable blessing, not to France only, but to Europe; and that the bloodshed and violence were to a great extent due to the beaten party, who would not leave off their underhand plotting, and in the most foolish way called down on themselves the violence of those who would otherwise have gladly left them alone. That is how most of us in England were taught to look at the matter. "It was a glorious change, the setting free of a nation of slaves; but just because they had so long been slaves there was a good deal of inevitable blood-letting in the process."

Now, however, a strong party, with M. Taine for mouthpiece, and M. d'Héricault for showman, and half-a-dozen other eloquent writers for chorus, is telling young France that the Revolution was a cruel blunder—that the old system was gradually reforming itself, and that the country had never had a better set of nobles and a more exemplary clergy* than those, so many of whom were made shorter by a head during the horrors of 1793.

As for the party which got the upper hand in the Revolution, it does not need many words to expose their infamy—mean and brutal as well as bloodthirsty, there is sometimes even a comic side to their cruelty. M. Taine is driven to the old explanation that they were mad; but then the wonder is how a nation,

* Undoubtedly the clergy were freer under the old local patronage than under the modern yoke of tyrannical Bishops.

five-sixths of which held quite the opposite views, should have allowed itself to be ruled—and guillotined—by a handful of madmen.

Herein is the warning to us and to all time from that Reign of Terror. It is so much easier to put men into power than to turn them out; when they are once in they can always be sure of a certain following; and there is in every nation a "residuum" which likes blood and rapine, and which, unless it is put down at the outset, will stand by those under whom it can hope for unlimited license.

The promises of the patriots of '89 were magnificent; the ghastly performance may be judged of from M. Taine's facts and M. d'Héricault's reproductions of the caricatures of the time. Robespierre, in a wilderness of guillotines, just going himself to behead the hangman—the two being sole survivors in all France—is one of the most significant of these. But how did Robespierre ever get the power to do this mischief, when not only the thought and culture but the numerical strength of the nation was all against him? That is not our question to-day. To answer it would need a laborious study of the Revolution histories. Our business is to take care that no political changes put an English Robespierre in the saddle. And a great help to preventing this will be to see what came in France of giving to such men the control of affairs.

M. Taine's facts are unhappily true, whatever we may think of his conclusions; and, as I said, there is a quasi-comic side to a good deal of this misery for those who are hard-hearted enough to look down on it, not as men on whose country the like evils may possibly fall, but as cynical philosophers.

M. Taine says this glorification of '89 did not begin, till the generation which had seen the Revolution at work had died out. They knew too much, and would have set the romancers right at once. But when they were gone, these romancers had it all their own way, for the written record, partly in unpublished archives, partly in private memoirs, was so bloody that nobody cared to meddle with it. And it is indeed a bloody record. Fancy what went on at Toulon. Four thousand of the most anti-revolutionary inhabitants had got off in our fleet; but, said Deputy Fréron, the whole town was tarred with the same brush, and he at once picked out four hundred dockyard men

and had them shot for having gone on working while the place was in the hands of the English. Then he ordered all good citizens, on pain of death, to assemble in the Champ de Mars, and, placing his guns and soldiers all round, he set the Jacobin Committee to pick whom they liked out of the crowd. The victims were planted against a wall and shot down; and the same thing went on next day, "and shall go on," said Fréron, "till we are rid of all the traitors." Very soon eight hundred had been shot, and one thousand eight hundred guillotined, among them one old man of ninety-four, who had to be carried to his death in an armchair. At Orange, in like manner, they guillotined an old lady of eighty, who had been out of her mind for years. She thought she was being driven out to pay calls. In three months the population of Toulon was brought down from twenty-eight thousand to less than seven thousand. Meanwhile, the Convention decreed that Toulon should be rased to the ground—nothing left but the arsenals and houses for the workmen. Twelve hundred masons from the neighbouring departments were pressed for the work. The very name was to perish. What was left was henceforth to be called Port-la-Montagne (as Marseilles was to be known as "Commune sans nom"). At Lyons the same thing went on on a larger scale. Here fourteen hundred workmen were employed for six months in pulling down the splendid mansions of the Place Bellecour, the Castle, and all the finest parts of the city. Fifteen million francs were paid out in wages for destroying national property to the amount of three or four hundred millions. The killing was in proportion; the confiscation wholesale; and yet, by their own account, the Jacobins "had only one thousand five hundred faithful men in all Lyons." How came it to pass, then, that they had so completely the mastery of all the rest?

One does not like, for the credit of human nature, to talk of La Vendée and Carrier's drownings. Here there was the excuse (such as it was) that the Vendéans were aliens. Our Commonwealth men had the same excuse when they drowned in batches the Irish papists sent over to fight for Charles the First. But our Republicans mostly confined themselves to men with arms in their hands. When Blake's troops, at Lyme, "did hunt along the Cobb a priest and an Irishwoman, and made them

jump off into the sea at the end," this is noted as a rare exception, and may just remind us that we are not safe from perpetrating noyades because we are sober English people.

Carrier and his fellow-demons preferred women and children for victims. One of them, John Héron, a tailor, who had been made inspector of soldiers' rations, used to go about with his pockets full of ears, and with one stuck on his cap by way of cockade. One is glad to find that the work in La Vendée was too much for the average Republican stomach; the troops struck work, and Carrier had to enrol a "German legion", mostly deserters from across the frontiers who could scarcely speak a word of French, and a body of "American hussars", blacks and mulattoes, under whose treatment the girls and women whom they did not drown went mad, and were then shot.

At this time there were in the whole country at least half a million people (a good many of them were babes) in prison—people of all ranks: a charcoal-seller, his wife, and seven children; servants, dressmakers, even beggars. And such prisons! Forty-five men in a room, with only ten little palliasses amongst them; fifty-four women sharing nine wretched shake-downs; and all in rags amidst vermin and filth unspeakable, fighting the very dogs for bones which they then tried to make into soup. No wonder the prison death-rate was fearful. It was far higher in the hulks, in which the priests were packed closer than negroes in a slaveship. The slaver's interest is to save as many of his cargo as he can; the Republican captain's one idea was to rid the State of these "vermin in cassocks". But no wonder prisoners fared badly when "good citizens" were well-nigh starving. Three years of Jacobin management, helped by two bad harvests, brought France to the verge of starvation. There were still plenty of good things for the Government; they and their agents lived in more than royal luxury—nay, in the most cynical excess. But almost everybody else was on famine rations; and the women had to stand in line all night outside the bakers' and butchers' shops to get their wretched allowance next morning. It is a sickening picture: on one side Collot d'Herbois in a coach-and-six, going about in state like the Grand Turk; Barrère, with his airs and graces, playing the amiable to the ladies, bowing as they hand in their petitions, and when

he was safe in his office flinging the whole lot in the fire, with the remark: "There, my day's correspondence is done." No matter how hard it was to get bread, Barrère kept up his handsome villa at Clichy, and dined there magnificently twice a decade (the Republican substitute for week) with a few choice spirits and a bevy of pretty girls.

Worse even than this was the way in which the local tyrants, headed by men sent down from the Convention, went to work. They fixed on the richest house in a town, seizing plate and jewellery without giving any account; and there they feasted, "requisitioning" the choicest wines and the best food the place could furnish, and habitually going drunk to the bench where they were to sit in judgment on men's lives. No wonder that thousands were killed without even form of trial; and that when, owing to deaths in prison or some such cause, the number of prisoners fell short of that on the lists, the wine-bemuddled judge would cry out: "I must have the full tale. If they are not there we must put down others to make up!"

Such judges, too! At Troyes, the head patriot was a journeyman baker, who had turned dancing-master, and then soldier, and whom his comrades in La Vendée had hunted out of the regiment for running away in face of the enemy; but he was a glib talker. With him was the mayor, another soldier who had pocketed the bounty-money for the Vendean campaign, and then had got his discharge. This man was a convicted forger and a drunkard, and he and his peers used to be boozing in an inn, when not "sitting in committee". To these drinking-bouts everybody had to bring his own cup; and the patriots might be seen walking through the streets with church chalices under their arms. What a nation, to allow men like these to live like princes, while in Paris the daily allowance sank at times to two ounces of bread! Such illiterate rogues, too! They could roar out sounding nonsense about "the tree of Liberty thriving best when it is watered with the blood of tyrants"; but they could not write a decent letter. M. Taine gives some of their effusions, the spelling of which is as babyish as he assures is the hand-writing. "Ces (ses) opignons peroise insipide," is a sample.*

What could one expect from a mob of rag and bone men, horse-dealers, cobblers, and

* André Chénier, the poet, is put down in his death-warrant as "de constendinoble".

small pastrycooks? The difficulty was to get any kind of men to act as Republican agents. At Rochefort the executioner was chosen president of the revolutionary committee; at Rheims, the president was a drunken scoundrel, who, though he could not even write his name, had christened himself Mutius Scaevola. The Jacobins had conquered France; and it gives one a poor idea of the French nation to find what a set of low ruffians its conquerors were.

In the other panel of our picture you see the women dropping, as they stand in line, hour after hour, their feet in the frozen mud, waiting their turn. A German traveller says: "I can still hear the dull, weak voice of a well-dressed woman, who said: 'Help me, sir; I'm not a beggar. I've some talent. You may have seen some of my work in the Salon. For two days I've not tasted food, and I'm going mad.'" This German used to fill his pockets with bread as he left the hotel for a walk, "and I found the most respectable people really grateful for a bit," he says. "One poor old nun, of noble family, I saw gnawing a bone she had picked out of the gutter. She had no relation—nobody to fight for her in the queue of bread-seekers." This rationing went on, more or less, for three years; and how, during that time, the people in hospitals fared is too horrible to think of. Fancy giving a woman, who had just undergone an operation, a dozen beans instead of a cup of strong beef-tea. The blood from the slaughter-houses was eagerly sought after, and the people fought for the stale cabbage-stalks. Nor were there queues for bread and meat only. With our fleets shutting up the ports, everything had to be rationed. Queues for butter, oil, candles—even for wine, since the assignat had gone down so low that growers would only sell at the point of the bayonet. After they had got their rations, people had to fight for them. Arms and ribs were broken, men and women stabbed, children knocked down in the gutter, all in the name of liberty and brotherhood.

In the country it was almost as bad; the peasants, too weak to till the land, went about digging for roots; a meal of bran and acorns was a luxury; dead women, with babes at their breasts, were found about the fields; even the big towns gave up lamps at night, oil being so scarce. Some places were five days without bread. The same German traveller, Meissner, tells how he went to six bakers'-shops at Nancy without finding any—they had none at the

hotel. At last, at a pastrycook's, he got a dozen little old Savoy biscuits, for which he was charged fifteen francs! Brewing was strictly forbidden, to the great disgust of Strasburg and all the Alsace country. All the barley was wanted for Paris. Whatever happened, Paris must have some sort of rations, or the Government would be pulled down. If anybody tried to hide corn or other food, he was treated as a public enemy. A man got a sucking-pig from his cousin, a farmer six leagues out of Paris; within three hours the pig had been seized and divided among his neighbours, the man had been thrown into prison, and a detachment had gone out to see whether there were any more pigs where that came from.

All along it had been unsafe to be seen in the streets except in shabby or working clothes. Ladies had to carry baskets if they did not want to be insulted; every now and then someone in a silk dress would have it torn off her back by her "sisters". A man who had not an old coat was obliged to put on a carmagnoles (Piedmontese cloak). In 1794 it became dangerous even to look plump and well fed. Henriot made a swoop on the Palais Royal and arrested one hundred and thirty people, whose only fault was that they were "gras et bien dodus", and therefore could not be good Sansculottes. "He who has two courses must give to him who has none; for everybody who eats more than the rest is a thief. He robs the commonwealth, sole lawful owner of all food; and personally, too, he robs those who have less to eat than he has." That was the "inexorable logic" of the mad pedants who had the control of everything. "It is by the have-nots (gueux), and by them alone," Robespierre declared in 1793, "that the country can be saved. Every rich man is a counter-revolutionist." In April, 1794, half the farmers were in prison because they would not tell where their stores of wheat were, and would not sell except for gold or jewellery. Up to the same date, in the eleven departments of the West, twenty towns and one thousand eight hundred villages had been destroyed, and in other parts whole neighbourhoods had either run off or been imprisoned wholesale, the land being left wholly desolate. From Hagenau and Weissenbourg alone, the country that Erckmann-Châtian write about (though they take care not to mention this ugly fact), forty thousand, more than two-thirds of the whole population, went

across the German frontier. Happily in December, 1794, a great convoy of a hundred and sixteen corn-ships from America got safely into Brest, and the harvest was splendid, though the farmers were so out of heart that the getting it in was in many places left to bands of patriots, male and female. No wonder men lost heart when they were liable to be treated as Tarlot, Henriot's aide-de-camp, treated Farmer Gilbon near Corbeil. Planting fifty men round the house, he went in and asked for arms. The wife gave him a fowling-piece, and then she and her husband were bound hand and foot with their heads in bags, the eight men-servants and two maids being treated in the same way. "Now for your plate. I hear you've got some striped with fleur-de-lis and other unlawful marks." So to save time the closets were broken open, and twenty-six silver plates and dishes, besides spoons, and cups, and snuffboxes, and watches, were carried off. "I'll make out a list at my leisure when I get back to Meaux," says Tarlot, "but I want your ready-money first, and if you do not tell me where it is, there's a guillotine close by." Gilbon, an old man of seventy-one, begged to be untied and he would tell, but the brutes took him into the kitchen and put his feet into the hot ashes. At last he told them where was his poor hoard of seventy-two francs in coin and the five or six thousand assignats that he had just received from the Government for his wheat. They took every farthing, ate up all they could find, broke open the cellar-door and broached a cask of wine, and went away to play the same game elsewhere.

Resistance was the rarest thing in the world. One remembers the Somersetshire farmers in our Civil War, who took sides neither with King nor Commons, but formed bands for self-defence, singing :

If that you attempt to plunder our cattle,
We are resolved to offer you battle.

But the French farmers were as paralysed as the townsfolk. M. Taine says the only instance of resistance he has found was near Sens, where three brothers Chaperon were accused of having a hidden store of wheat. They said they had only enough to sow their land, and, barricading their house, beat off the gendarmes when they came to search. The Sens national guard marched out, cannon was brought up, and a regular siege was begun. The Commandant of the guard was shot down, and nearly forty of the besiegers killed or wounded. At last the house was set on fire ; and one is sorry

to find that two Chaperons, a brother and a sister, were captured, and, of course, guillotined. Not encouraging, this, for farmers, whose forced sales, at a "maximum" fixed by Parisian pedants, were paid in worthless bits of paper.

Everything was regulated by the Paris pedants. At public fêtes the programme was full of stage directions—the proper moment for the women to look sentimental, for the mothers to hold up their babies and get a blessing from the presiding goddess. This was when Moloch was in good humour ; when he was in his usual temper a fête would be solemnised by going to some country churchyard, tearing the crosses off all the graves, and making a bonfire of them for the holiday-makers to dance the carmagnole round. One does not like to think of the Paris mob plundering the sacristy of Notre Dame, lighting fires in the nave, and cooking mackerel on the communion-plate ; or of that orgie, which M. d'Héricault pictures, and in which the vestments and holy vessels of St. Roch's Church were used in a sort of devil's mass. It makes one shudder when one thinks that this was not French nature only, but human nature. Lord Tennyson is wrong with his "wild fool-fury of the Seine", and his "blind hysterics of the Celt" ; the men who, under John of Leyden, played the farce of Liberty Equality and Fraternity at Münster were mostly stolid Dutch.

Two more points ought to be noticed—the way in which the Reds treated the scientists. Chemists were really indispensable, for powder had to be made, and the supplies of Indian saltpetre were cut off ; yet Fourcroy fared no better than Lavoisier, to whose appeal for a fortnight's respite, that he might finish some experiment, the coarse Auvergnat Coffinhal replied : "La république n'a pas besoin de savants." Henriot found a good many to support his proposal for burning the National Library. Carnot and two or three more cool-headed, sensible men were tolerated because without them everything would soon have come to a deadlock ; Carnot even kept enough of the old staff to get on with the routine work, but he did it on the sly. To the true Sansculotte, politics and business were just as hateful as science. His first thought, when money got "tight", was to imprison all the bankers, just as he fancied he could bring round public opinion by guillotining "tous les hommes d'esprit"—and not the men only ; over and over

again one reads of some poor girl sentenced "pour être spirituelle et disposée à se moquer des patriotes". Very consistently the Reds scouted even the principles on which civilised warfare is based. Barrère proposed, and Carnot had to endorse, a decree of the Convention that all English and Hanoverian prisoners should be shot; and that at a time when for every English subject who suffered we could have made reprisals on at least three Frenchmen. The soldiers refused to carry out the edict. "Let them kill them themselves and eat them afterwards if they like, the brutes!" said a sergeant, speaking for his regiment.

Another count in M. Taine's terrible indictment is quite a shock. Most people have thought that the Reds, with all their faults, were, like their "sea-green incorruptible" chief, above taking bribes. One could understand their turning over confiscated property to themselves; their multiplying places that every patriot might have his share; their keeping up an army of forty-sous men to shout, and vote, and bully. I could understand that Meaux Cathedral was offered for sale at six hundred francs, and found no buyer, because the expense of pulling it down would have been more than the value of the materials. I was not surprised to find that, after all this confiscation, the public debt had risen from four to fifty milliards. But I was surprised to learn that high-class patriots made an income out of ci-devant prisoners. Fouquet-Tinville got one thousand crowns the first month, one thousand two hundred and fifty the next, and so on, for keeping the names of two of the Boufflers family at the bottom of the list; and his is only a typical case. We say truly that Napoleon was "the child of the Revolution". Given three years of Red rule, France had nothing for it but to turn her hordes across the frontier, and live at her neighbour's expense, as in the days of Brennus. The Grand Army and all that came of it were the natural outcome of Jacobin liberty, Sansculotte fraternity, and Robespierrean equality. The lesson is one which the civilised world has not yet thoroughly taken to heart. Few of us go so far as an Oxford undergraduate, now a very thriving man of business, who moved in a debating club, that "Danton, Robespierre, and Marat were three of the greatest benefactors of mankind"; but many go a good deal too far—much farther than they would go if they studied M. Taine.

I hope and believe that such a "Terror",

such a chronic panic, is impossible in England. It came on amid floods of brilliant verbiage and the paralysis of all authority. The king was a poor figure-head, looking on helplessly while the mob on one hand and his wife and the more violent nobles on the other fought it out to the death, instead of insisting on law and order while his reforms were being effected, and calling on all good Frenchmen to help him in putting down lawlessness. Well, we have the verbiage; let us hope we shall never have the other conditions under which was developed the Fraternity that cut off a man's head for saying, in a moment of abstraction: "Bonjour, messieurs."

TORPEDO-BOATS.

IF Dr. Johnson could have extended his life into the railroad days he would no doubt have modified his views on post-chaise travelling in favour of express-trains; and, if he had lived in the present time, he would probably have made some reservation in favour of torpedo-boats. Pleasant, locomotion in them can never be, but there is a fierce excitement in it that is beyond mere pleasurable sensation. Life in them for more than an hour or two at a time is trying, and continued for any length of time would be intolerable, though in time of war they would have to keep the sea for many days at a time. They did so during the Bantry Bay manoeuvres; but the officers and men were completely worn out—weary from insufficient food and sleep, and sore with the constant knocking about from the violent motion of the vessel. It is true also that some of these vessels have made voyages to the Black Sea—and even to Monte Video, taking over seventy days on the passage—but though some of it was done under canvas and an easier motion thus obtained, the voyage was a test of endurance such as very few people would like to undergo.

In the early days of torpedo-boats life in them was even less endurable, for, with the idea of their being handier and more portable, they were made of much smaller size. Experience, however, showed that it was impossible for such vessels to keep the sea; and as without power to do so half their usefulness would be gone, their dimensions have been increased till the first-class boats now measure one hundred and twenty-five feet in length by about thirteen feet in breadth, and float with about five feet of their

height above the water-line, and rather less than that below it. They are nearly always painted grey; their funnels are very short—not more than about ten feet high; they have, of course, no masts, spars, or rigging of any kind; their bows are ram-shaped, and have an excrescence above, which carries the forward torpedo-tube; and as they come tearing silently through the water at a speed of nineteen knots, or nearly twenty-two miles an hour, they have such a wicked, venomous look that it is difficult to think of them as inanimate machines.

The torpedo-boats built in England for foreign countries are nearly always made with rounded decks, commonly called "turtle backs", as greater strength is thereby obtained with the same weight of material. Our own authorities, however, consider that the usefulness of the deck-space for working purposes is thereby impaired to an extent that makes too high a price to pay for the greater strength, and the English boats are consequently built with flat decks.

Standing on the after part of this deck you have then before you a flat expanse one hundred and twenty-five feet long, and thirteen feet broad in its widest part, surrounded with a light wire rail. The fittings on the deck have a grim simplicity. First come a couple of round metal hatches about two feet six inches in diameter, which give access to the cabins. These cabins have no skylights, and any further air that is wanted is obtained by means of a ventilator which screws up from inside. Forward of this is a bullet-proof tower, from inside which the officer in command directs the movements of his vessel, and in which also is the torpedo-tube, from which those terrible shots are fired. Beyond this again comes the engine-room hatch; then another bullet-proof tower with another torpedo-tube; then another round hatchway leading to the men's quarters; and lastly, right up in her nose, a third torpedo-tube running under the deck, and out through the bow above water. Such is the most recent contrivance for destroying life and property wholesale.

The engines which drive these vessels are of course of the latest design, beautiful machines that give the screw three hundred and seventy revolutions a minute, and under favourable conditions—that is to say, in moderately smooth water, and with about half their full complement of coal on board, drive the ship through the water at the rate of nearly twenty-two miles an

hour. It is almost impossible to remain on deck at such times, particularly if there is any sea. The water sweeps over the deck; the spray drives into your face like discharges of small shot; the force of the wind half chokes you; and the draught in the furnaces, which are fed by a fan making a thousand revolutions a minute, occasionally sends out of the funnel lumps of red-hot coal and cinder, which come whirling down aft, and make you duck your head in respectful obeisance if you are anywhere in their neighbourhood.

This strong draught, necessary for obtaining the combustion required for high rates of speed, makes a difficulty which has yet only been partially overcome, for flame comes out of the funnel as well as coal, and at night advertise the enemy of the approach of the deadly boat. Otherwise, the grey, low-lying craft comes gliding swiftly and silently through the water, and is barely distinguishable from the surrounding waves. Even in daylight it is difficult to see them till they have come almost within striking distance; and when they are observed, their colour is so indistinct, their size so small, and their speed so great, that an avalanche of projectiles might be launched at them without interfering with their progress. In time of war these vessels would swarm out of our harbours, and woe betide the enemy's ships that they fell in with. Themselves almost invisible, they can watch the hostile vessels at their ease, and when they think the conditions favourable, rush in, and try to launch their terrible projectile. Then will follow a passage of arms that will try the nerves of the stoutest warrior. The problem is simple, and can only last a couple of minutes or so. The torpedo-boat is coming on at the rate of eighteen or twenty knots an hour, in order to launch her torpedo at the vessel she is attacking. If she can get within striking distance without being disabled, and the officers in charge of her keep their heads, the fate of her opponent is sealed. When once a torpedo strikes a vessel and explodes, the result is a hole that it would take another vessel half as big as herself to stop, and the lieutenant in command of the torpedo-boat can go back to his harbour with the comfortable consciousness of having weakened the enemy to the extent of three or four hundred lives, and property to the value of three-quarters of a million of money.

On the other side, the ship sees the

torpedo-boat advancing from, say, a mile and a half or two miles away, and sets to work to try and disable her before she comes near enough to strike. A boat thirteen feet wide coming towards you end-on at the rate of over twenty miles an hour—tearing, moreover, through the waves so that they sweep right over her and half-way up her funnel—is not an easy mark to hit at a distance of a mile and a half, even if the air is perfectly clear and free from smoke. The ship's heavy guns would, therefore, be useless in her defence, and she must trust to her smaller weapons—Hotchkiss, Nordenfeld, Gardner, or whatever machine-guns she may be armed with. In an actual engagement, however, the air would be so thick with smoke that neither attacker nor attacked could see each other till they were close upon each other. Modern heavy guns burn such an enormous quantity of powder at each discharge, and the smoke thrown out by it makes such a dense cloud, that, when many vessels are congregated together, and are firing simultaneously, the torpedo-boat which discharges her weapon at any distance must trust to luck for its destination. She cannot possibly see her enemy till she is close alongside, having stumbled across her in the dark, as it were, and then it would be a snap-shot on either side. If the officer in command of the torpedo-boat were perfectly certain that the vessel in front of him was an enemy, and not one of his own fleet, and if he had his torpedo in a position to fire, he could discharge it and blow up the ship, while the ship would be able to rain down such a torrent of shot from machine-guns and rifles as no torpedo-boat could live in. It is, therefore, a question of luck—a snap-shot in some short interval when for a moment the curtain of smoke is blown aside by a chance current of wind.

The first of the conditions mentioned—that of a torpedo-boat advancing from a distance of a mile and a half, and visible for the whole distance to the ship she is going to attack—need not be considered. There must always be a lot of firing going on, and as soon as that begins darkness sets in. As an example of what that obscurity is, it may be mentioned that at the review held at Spithead in honour of the Shah of Persia, when the saluting began it was impossible to see the vessels around you. In a boat made fast to the stern of one of the saluting-ships, the ship was absolutely invisible after the third or fourth gun was

fired. The men who during the salute were manning the yards disappeared into darkness. There was nothing but the sound of the guns to guide you. Even when the ships were all moored, that guide was confusing enough. There was nothing left in the world but sound. All form and colour had disappeared; there was nothing but the fierce crack and boom of the guns, and that was everywhere; you could not tell whence it came. If the vessels had been moving, this uncertainty would have been much greater, and, had it been a general engagement, a torpedo launched there would have been as likely to hit friend as foe.

On the other hand, a fleet advancing on an enemy's port would be met by these boats, who would make a dash at them. Some would be disabled and sunk, but every shot fired at them would make the next shot more difficult to aim. It would be no use to fire at the torpedo-boats at a distance of more than a mile, and at a quarter of a mile they would launch their own weapons. A first-class torpedo-boat will cover a mile in less than three minutes. There will, therefore, only be two minutes during which the boats can be attacked by the ships, and those that survive would drive their torpedoes "into the brown" with a large probability that one of them would be hit. It is a different kind of warfare to that of the old days, when two wooden ships armed with twelve-pounder guns lay alongside each other, yard-arm to yard-arm, and pounded away till one or other gave in from sheer exhaustion and lowered her flag. There will be very little taking of prizes in any modern war—between rams, and torpedoes, and monster shells, the ships that do not win will go to the bottom.

The officers and men in charge of the torpedo-boats have no pleasant time of it. The steel-plates of which a first-class torpedo-boat is built are only an eighth of an inch thick, some of the smaller ones are only a sixteenth of an inch, and the consequent weakness of structure, with their great length in proportion to breadth, makes the strain of rising and falling in a short sea apt to break their backs. In such a sea, therefore, it is dangerous to drive them at less than eight or ten miles an hour, when they go through the waves instead of over them. At about this speed in most boats the vibrations of the engines and the vibrations of the boat synchronise,

and the combined oscillations make the bow and stern of the boat wave up and down till they nod at each other. Men who are standing on deck astern jump up and down like marionettes. Even in absolutely smooth water, when you sit in the small cabin and try to eat, your knife and fork clatter on your plate like castanettes. The water sweeps clean over the deck, which, after a while, the vibration makes to leak like a sieve, so that everything below—clothes, beds, etc.—is wet through. Truly service in a torpedo-boat is not one of pleasure.

The prolific ingenuity of human invention is, however, fast carrying the deadliness of warfare beyond that of these swift-moving engines of destruction. A boat has already been invented, and is actually in existence, which can sink below the surface of the water at will, and travel many miles entirely out of sight; and many keen and fertile brains are at work perfecting the horrible invention. Such a vessel, on sighting a hostile fleet or vessel, would immediately dive down and make for her foe, unseen, and absolutely impervious to attack. Her enemy cannot tell where she is, or when she may blow her to pieces. She has absolutely no means of defence. Flight is her only resource. The difficulty the under-water boat has to contend with is that of seeing through the water. Even now there are signs of the solution of the problem, but even if it is not overcome the boat can rise to the surface when she likes, take a fresh observation of her enemy's whereabouts, and dive down again preparatory to the final blow. A few such boats would be more terrible to a hostile fleet than a whole row of iron-clad forts. They would be an intangible, haunting danger that would demoralise the stoutest heart.

In the modern style of sea warfare the picturesque grouping and the stately movements of the old fights is wanting, but, whatever the conditions may be, there is always room for individual gallantry, and, whether the battles are fought with three-decked wooden sailing-ships or with thin steel torpedo-boats, the chances are that the commander with the greatest genius for fighting will win now, as he did in the days of our grandfathers.

The opportunities of the torpedo-boat men have been few so far. Except in the American War, these vessels can scarcely be said to have been used, and during the American War they were in their

infancy. There was time enough during that war, however, to show what they could do in the hands of a resolute man, and time, also, for deeds of daring and devotion such as have seldom been equalled.

The Confederates had a boat which could be made to sink below the water and travel there for some distance, but they had not been able to overcome the difficulty, which has been insuperable till now, of making her return to the surface at will. She was apt to put her nose downwards and make straight for the bottom with perfect disregard of the steering-gear. In experimenting with her, precautions had been taken to counteract by external means such aberrations on her part, but in actual war she was useless unless men could be found who would strike one blow in her, and die in striking it. And men were found who would do this thing. The Federal fleet were investing New Orleans, and it was of the utmost importance to the Confederate force that the hostile flagship or one of her consorts should be destroyed. The boat was there in the harbour which could go out and strike a fatal blow that her enemy would be powerless to evade, but the striking of this blow meant certain death. Men can generally be found to lead or take part in a forlorn hope. The danger is great, but there is always a hope of return, and the glory is in proportion to the danger. But in this case there was no hope of return. Whoso went out in this boat must be prepared to give his life absolutely for the good of his country—to save her from her danger, and then himself die like a rat drowned in its hole. And such men were found. They went on board, calmly made their preparations, and then steamed out on their last voyage. All the populace turned out on the quays and the shores, and gave the heroes a godspeed, such as must almost have been worth buying with life. They never came back, and the Federal ship never returned home. Both sank together, and when, after the war was over, it was proposed to raise the sunken ship, the diver who went down to examine found the monster with half her bottom blown in, and her little antagonist who had dealt the blow lying by her side.

It would be difficult to find a parallel to this for pure devotion; but a young lieutenant in the Federal navy performed a feat of arms in which the pluck and determination were as great. The Confederate vessels lay some miles up the

river protected by batteries. This young lieutenant determined to destroy one of these ships, and to that end started up the river with an ordinary steam-launch and a spar-torpedo. These torpedos are carried on the end of a spar which projects from the boat, and are fired by percussion-caps in their heads, so that they have to be driven against the side of the hostile ship before they explode. News had been sent up the river that the attempt was to be made, and as the launch made her way up she was saluted by a storm of projectiles from the batteries she passed. By some miracle she escaped these without being disabled, to find on arriving that the ship she was bound for had surrounded herself with booms over which the torpedo could not reach her. A storm of bullets tore up the water as the boat, foiled in her attack, retreated; but again she escaped disablement. Her retreat, however, was not for long. Turning a short distance away, she came down, as hard as her engines would drive her, straight for the enemy's bow. With the impetus of her speed, she jumped the boom and drove her torpedo into the enemy, exploding it at the same moment that a heavy shot from one of the enemy's bow guns knocked the boat into atoms. The attacker and the attacked died at the same instant. The loss of life was, of course, terrible; but, curious to relate, the author of the catastrophe was himself unhurt. After his boat was knocked into matchwood under him, he found himself squattering in the water, probably with a very vague idea of how he got there. Somehow, he managed to float down the river, and regained his own fleet, and was himself the first to bring the news of the success of his endeavour, and the destruction of his own boat.

Pluck and enterprise, entire and absolute devotion of individuals to their cause, there will always be as long as our race exists; but such virtues are only brilliant spots in the unspeakable horrors of war. War is a terrible necessity that is for the present imposed upon mankind. The day when the lion will lie down with the lamb is far distant. Religion itself has caused more wars than it has stopped. Neither from the sense of mankind, nor the teaching of the churches can universal peace be hoped. The only hope is to make war so deadly that the fear of man will do what his sense and his religion have failed to accomplish. The more terrible do weapons of destruction become, the more certain is

the wholesale sacrifice of life and property in war, the less ready will nations be to engage in war. When our power of destruction becomes comparable with that imagined by Lord Lytton in "The Coming Race", war will have been made impossible. The concentration of all the known resources of science on the work of destruction gives us our best hope of peace, and the invention of every fresh appliance for scientific murder must, therefore, be hailed as a gain to the race.

LONDON IN THE SNOW.

Now and then we get a gentle reminder that there are powers of the air and heavens which are not amenable to the vestries and local boards, and a fall of snow is sufficient to paralyse the resources of our boasted civilisation, and to reduce us to almost primitive conditions of life. Who that witnessed it can forget the sight that London presented after the great snowstorm of 1881, when a furious gale came charged with an infinity of snow and vapour, and darkness settled over London at mid-day? Everywhere drifted the finely-powdered snow—neither doors nor windows would keep it out—fires were often impracticable, as the wind roared and raved down the chimneys. Then came huge snow-drifts that blocked the thoroughfares, and were piled high against people's doors; while the streets were a howling wilderness, like the desert of Gobi in a snowstorm. Then vehicles ceased to run, the shops were closed, and premature darkness brooded everywhere. This was on the 18th of January, it will be remembered, when there had been already a rare frost of six days' duration. Whole streets and districts found their water supply cut off by the intense frost. Hydrants were opened from the main pipes in the thoroughfares, and it was a sight to see the people, in a long line, with every possible kind of vessel that would hold water—and many that would not—waiting for their turn at the tap. Baths were out of the question for weeks; and even the milk-sellers ceased their rounds—an event connected, in popular belief, with the failure of the water-supply. Then the river was filled with blocks of ice, which floated up and down with the tide, and put a stop to navigation. Coal was getting scarce, and was difficult to get even at three times its ordinary and excessive cost. Another furious snowstorm, and London

might have become a curiosity for future generations ; a few more weeks' frost, and a general starvation might have been commenced.

Happily, all of a sudden, the frost broke up ; there was water—water everywhere—pipes bursting, cisterns overflowing, and the streets a liquid mass of slush.

And now we have again had a taste of what a severe winter can do for us. But this time the snow came not with a warring wind, but with gentle, dove-like softness. The sleeping world knew nothing of the treat preparing for it. Only a few policemen and night-watchmen were in the secret, and they did not betray it to anybody. Years ago people might have heard the old Charley cry : "Past four o'clock, and a snowy morning!" But the constable of the present day does not link himself with the traditions of the old night-watch by any audible remarks about the weather. All is soft, muffled, noiseless, and people sleep on, lulled by the quietude and the murky light, which seems to grow still murkier as the morning advances.

Now, the average Londoner, as he hastily arrayed himself for breakfast, asked himself, "Shall I find my morning-paper on the table?" It is a selfish thought, no doubt, but next in hardship to finding no breakfast at all on the table would be the deprivation of the favourite journal. We are not quite sure whether it snows, or blows, or freezes, till we have read confirmation of the same in the conspicuous columns of our newspaper. Happily, the really wonderful organisation that purveys our daily news has not been choked by the snow. But again it is disquieting to find that the newspaper does not contain a word about the snowstorm. However, that leads to the conviction that it must all have come on in the early hours of the morning, and young hopeful, who let himself in with a latchkey at some doubtful hour, assures the governor that when he came home the sky was still serene.

This is the time for refurbishing up memories of old-fashioned winters, when snow and frost were looked for as matters of course, and a green Christmas was held to foretell a full churchyard. And is this to be the beginning of a fresh cycle of hard winters? We may talk of almanacks, too, and weather prophecies—as King Richard, in his misfortunes, proposed to discuss the question of worms and epitaphs—of excellent shots by the

prophets, and equally disastrous failures. Such as that wonderful fluke by Murphy in 1838, when he hit the coldest day of the year, and recorded it three months in advance. That hit made the fortune of the almanack for the year, and Paternoster Row was besieged with applicants for copies, and Murphy, who was a man with a system, a sober-minded man too, who had lights on the subject of meteorology, set out to map the weather for the following year with every hope of success. But on every prediction the event showed the prophet dismally, hopelessly in the wrong, as he dolefully admitted in the preface to the following year's volume. His excuse was that his calculations had been perfectly sound, his predictions compounded with accuracy, but that a miserable comet had run in from parts unknown, and had spoilt the whole batch. But the next year's almanack was equally a failure, and yet our weather-prophet did not despair. It could be shown that some of his predictions had been admirably fulfilled in Russia, while another set corresponded exactly with weather-reports from Mesopotamia. But the British public did not have much faith in weather-prophets after that. They did not care to know what was going to happen in Mesopotamia, and thus poor Murphy sank into oblivion.

If Murphy had lived in the present day, with all the abundant materials which are furnished from observations all over the world, he might have started some theory about the weather that would have held water a little better than his own. As it is, scientific meteorologists confine themselves to a forecast of twenty-four hours, and this morning—it is old Christmas Day on which I am writing, by the way—they have actually got snow on the record—snow or cold rain. Well, it does snow, without suspicion of error ; a regular soft, feather-bed kind of snowstorm of the good old-fashioned kind, such as they used to tell us children was caused by the old women plucking geese in Lincolnshire.

And that suggests what a mistake the alteration in the calendar was. We should have had a regular Christmas-number Christmas but for that unfortunate business of 1752, which has thrown all our popular sayings out of gear, and caused many people, without reason, to cast undeserved reflections on the wisdom of our ancestors.

But although we just missed having a merry, snowy Christmas of the good old

kind, yet there was a kind of compensation in the enforced holiday that the weather brought. With mails stopped in the snow, telegraph broken down, telephone all in a tangle, trains all keeping any kind of time, omnibuses stopped, and cabs and horses all snowed up in the yard, Brown wisely stops at home and helps his boys to make a slide in the garden. In the City the clerks, delighted at the absence of the governor, indulge in all kinds of gambols. Were there a proper enthusiasm of humanity about us we should shut up banks and Exchanges, and all set-to snowballing. That used to be done years ago in Liverpool, where the Stock Exchange used to be noted for its snowballing matches—bulls against bears, the latter more at home, it would seem, in the climatic conditions.

What a strange and almost pathetic sight is London in the snow—the great city almost dumb and forlorn, like one in old age and abandoned. The very houses in the poorer quarters seem to shiver, all huddled up under their snowy mantle, and the silence that broods over the scene is like the silence of death. Everywhere, indeed, is unwonted stillness, and London seems as deserted as the camp of the Assyrians, that was erst gleaming in purple and gold. Only the Strand is always alive, of course. Nothing will ever quite subdue the Strand. When London comes to its downfall—let us hope not until some New London has arisen to inherit its fame and its traditions—when this comes to pass, the last sparks of its vitality will linger in the Strand. There, shops will still be open, and the long predicted New Zealander will buy trinkets and photographs as memorials of his visit to the ruins of St. Paul's. And thus in spite of snow and frost the Strand always carries on its business, although in an intermittent way. Omnibuses struggle along, cabs move about at a footpace; and there are actually people, fresh-looking as if from the country, who are booking places for the night's performance at the box-offices of the theatres. They have faith in the future, these robust pleasure-seekers, and in their own ability to make their way through snowdrifts and across treacherous glissades.

There is some beauty in the sight of the great opening of Trafalgar Square, on the day after the storm, when the sun hangs like a round, fiery face in the sky—a jolly, affable face that you can gaze at without winking—the great field of snow piled here and there into dusky masses;

the dark buildings, with every balustrade and cornice outlined in white; King Charles and his steed all powdered, and whitened also, and hung with icicles; and great Nelson on his column crowned with snow-wreaths. The new Avenue looks like a gap in huge cliffs of strange, fantastic forms, all honeycombed in some of Nature's freaks, rather than a veritable street, which has, or should have, a beginning and an end.

Strange, too, looks Pall Mall with its festoons of wires glittering with icy particles, the widest stretch of wires, perhaps, in any city, beginning and ending you hardly know where in their enormous span; but now with many of the strands hanging broken from distant roofs; the ends neatly twined round lamp-posts, or hung limply on iron railings. There is a warning here against these extraordinary experiments in the way of carrying wires over wide, open spaces.

All seems strange and unfamiliar in this new aspect of things, till we turn our backs upon the grandiose country of club-houses and big hotels, and pass into the region of Whitehall; and then the buildings assume all of a sudden a sympathetic and human expression. They are dwarfed in size by the scale to which the eye is accustomed, but they wear a pleasant, comfortable aspect of old-fashioned dignity. There is the Admiralty; buildings these, whose doom is already fixed, heavy, sombre, and dull, and yet with a character of their own that sets off the graceful quaintness of the Horse Guards close by, with the unpretentious little dome and the clock by which so many generations of old soldiers have set their watches. That clock stopped in the snow-storm, by the way—stopped at half-past five. When the snow-flakes were whirling in a wild dance about its face, and lodging in every crevice, all in the wintry darkness of that snowy morning, the clock struggled gamely on, and then, enveloped in a snow-wreath, its hands could go no farther. Is there anything in prophecy about this? Has Nostradamus nothing to say about the stoppage of the Horse Guards clock, and can nothing portentous in the circumstance be discovered in the dark sayings of Mother Shipton?

But, all muffled and mantled in snow, these buildings seem to say that there is nothing to which they are unaccustomed in all this rough weather. It was worse than this, perhaps, when Marlborough was in winter quarters in the Low Countries;

and they can remember the great frosts when the Thames was frozen over, and there was one long fair and festival on the ice from Putney to Redriff. It seems only the other day, when our Peninsular heroes were shivering among the passes of the Pyrenees, that there was the last great Frost Fair on the river. "Shall we see another, old man?" asks the Horse Guards of the Admiralty in the stillness of the snow-covered streets, but without receiving a reply. There may be a Peninsular veteran left here and there, and a survivor from Waterloo, but who is left that can boast of having seen that last frost fair? The old Duke was busy about that time—the Iron Duke, whose presence seems still to hang about these old buildings—the familiar figure in blue surtout, white ducks, and shiny hat, whose two fingers were so affably raised to the salutes of the giant-warriors of Her Majesty's Bodyguard.

The giant-warriors are still there, muffled in their cloaks, their helmets glittering from the shaded interior—from their tabernacles all covered with hoods of snow. There is a marvellous aspect of quiet and tranquillity all over the wide thoroughfare, as if old London had come back again with its quiet, leisurely days. And as one turns to take in a last impression of the scene, a strange, cold thrill runs through the frame, and, looking up, behold we are standing under the scaffold of King Charles. A few country carts are rumbling along over the slippery surface; some could get no farther, and have been left there bivouacking in the streets; and the clear space in front of the banqueting-house is filled for the moment with the suggestion of a crowd of stern faces and the glitter of musket and halbert. There is a nipping, piercing cold in the air, and suddenly a dull, muffled shock. But it is only a fall of snow from a neighbouring roof, and ghostly suggestions are shaken off as we come in sight of the myriad unsuggestive pinnacles of Barry's palace.

And yet even here there is something strange and wonderful—a sight not seen for a few centuries by mortal man—and that is Westminster Hall crouching beneath the great pile of the Houses of Parliament, but with its snow-sprinkled stretch of roof, its little dormer-windows coldly stacked with little snowdrifts, and the great flying buttresses all picked out in white, all cold, gloomy, desolate, and yet with a kind of savage grandeur, speaking

of days when Kings, fierce and proud, kept Christmas and held high revel at Westminster, while the old Hall was festooned with snow and frost just as it is to-day.

HESTER.

A STORY IN TWO PARTS. PART I.

THE straightforwardest way I can start off with this story perhaps is by saying that I answer to the name of Billy Pickles, and, furthermore, by mentioning in what state of life it has pleased Heaven to give me that name at the hands of them as stood sponsor to me.

For being clad in my Sunday best, without a trace or speck of workaday about me, there's nothing hung out by way of signal to show that I follow the calling of an engine-driver—by which I don't mean that I have anything to do with the traffic on any railway, and so I won't mislead you. My business is on public works, and has been ever since I were about the height of yon table, at which time my job wasn't engine-driving, as you may well suppose, but summat as required a good bit less gumption. I dare say I might have got my 'stifficats and be driving an express now if I'd so wished, but every man has his likin's, and mine is for a tipping-engine on a big contract. It seems more nat'ral and joval to be running back and forrard among a lot of busy navvies than to be tearing along mile after mile of railroad, with no one to speak to but your stoker, and your heart fluttering with the responsibility of your cargo of human souls and bodies.

What I'm now going to speak of happened more years ago than I like to count, while Messrs. Rollingstock and Ballast were making the Stalebury, Carchester, and Westhampton Railway. Dear heart! when I think of the times that has gone by since then, it seems to me I am not speaking of myself at all, but of some other man.

I hadn't riz to engine-driving then. I was what is called "roperunner" on as neat a little tipping-engine as you need to see. A roperunner on public works is pretty much the same as a brakeman on a goods-train—that is, he has to see to coupling and uncoupling the waggons that run with his engine, and to drive the engine at a pinch. Why he should be called a roperunner I can't explain; no doubt there is a reason—as there is for most things—only it ain't easy to get at.

There was some very pretty work to be done along that thirty mile of line I spoke of just now, and our little engine—I mind she were called the Lady Cornewall—was at work in the very finest bit of all, where the railroad, coming out beyond Carchester, was to pass for about a quarter of a mile between the river and a mighty shoulder of chalky down called St. Martin's Hill. You can understand that next to the river would have to be an embankment, while the hillside would be turned into a 'normous cutting. Perhaps you've seen the place, and noticed how sheer, and high, and dazzling white it is—two hundred feet of slippery, barren chalk, with a thin layer of black earth, and a fringe of grass at the top; and if you have an eye for such matters you will have said to yourself: "Good Lord! How did the poor fellows who made that stick on to their work?" Yes, it's one of the finest excavations I ever saw; nevertheless, I remember it with neither pride nor pleasure, for the very name of Carchester cutting brings to my mind the saddest and darkest time I ever lived through.

Looking at me now, after hard work, and time, and cares have wrought their will and skill on me, you may think I am bragging a bit when I say that the days when I was roperunner on the Lady Cornewall, I was a very good-looking young fellow, and that if there'd been no other way for me to find it out, I should have guessed it by the way the girls had of making much of me. However, up to the day when my story begins, I'd kept my heart free, and gone no farther with any young woman of my acquaintance than a friendly joke.

It was one glorious morning late in April. If ever you've been on the South Downs, you'll know how glorious it was without my poor way of telling you. The air came warm and soft against your face, full of sweetness from the flowers that covered the broad water-meadows on the other side of the river. The alders and willows that bent over the water were covered with swelling buds; the swallows skimmed and dipped, flashing like so many shooting stars, and the sun shone down as if every thought of winter had gone out of the land, and as if the long curving downs had never looked cold and bleak under low driving clouds and a pitiless north-easter.

We had been very busy all morning—me and my driver, Steve Simes—and, being extry tired by the first warmth of summer, we were in no wise sorry to see dinner-

time. We stoked up, and took our Tommy down to the little bridge that crossed the river hard by, and sat down to enjoy ourselves. When we done eating, Steve dropped off for forty winks, while I smoked my pipe and watched the fish dart through the gravelly shallows. All of a sudden, I heard some of the men call down to us as loud as they could holler:

"Here, Steve—Pickles! Where are you? Come and look after a young rascal as is priggig from your coal-bunk!"

I didn't feel best pleased at being disturbed just then, for it wanted a quarter of an hour to time, and I made up my mind that, as I had to move, someone should pay the piper. So minded, I went as quick as I could to where the engine stood, and there, sure enough, was a young divvle of a boy half in the coal-bunk, sorting out the bits of coal he could lift, and putting them into a sack. In less time than it takes to say so, I was up on the engine, and had got him by the scruff of the neck, by which I held him until I had opened the fire-box and pushed his sack and our coals into it. After that, I give him a shove off the engine, and, following him down, I ketched hold of a strap that was handy, and laid into him as hard as I could, which, no doubt, was the best thing that could have been done to him. However, he didn't seem to agree with it, for he lifted up his voice and howled as if I had been murdering him. The more noise he made the more I felt inclined to flog him, particularly as I spotted him for one of a gipsy family who had come to live close at hand, and if he was to be loafing round all summer, it was just as well to teach him to forget the road to our coal-bunk.

How long I should have leathered him I can't say; I hadn't near finished, when someone caught hold of my arm from behind, and held on to me so tight that I was obliged to give in. Naturally, I turned sharp round, to see which of our chaps had the impudence to come interfering; and there, at my elbow, instead of the navvy I expected to see, stood a slim, tall girl of about nineteen years old, her dark eyes flashing, and her small face quite white with anger. She was catching at her breath, as if she had come running to the boy's help, otherwise she wouldn't have given me time to consider what she was like before she began pitching into me with all her might for ill-using a poor helpless child—that was her way of

putting it. I let her scold without opening my lips to tell her the rights of the matter, for there was that in her beautiful, angry brown eyes and in the quick trembling of her lips that kept me silent, with scarce a notion of what she was saying. My hands dropped at my sides, the strap slipped from between my fingers, and the young blackguard took to his heels and made himself scarce before the girl had come to an end of what she had to say.

By that time the commotion had brought a lot of the men round; and when she stopped for a moment—not because she was short of somewhat to say, but because she lacked breath to put it strong enough—one chap, perhaps being amused at her cheek, and perhaps wanting to bring a more pleasant look into her pretty face, said:

"Come, my lass, the lad ain't quite done for, and perhaps we can patch up the damage if we send round the hat."

Saying which, he pulled off his cap, dropped in a penny and handed it on. She said neither yea nor nay, but a pleasanter look came into her face and smoothed out the angry lines. I couldn't help feeling what a warm heart she must have to stand up so plucky for a little, sneaking chap like that; and, when the cap came to me with a good handful of coppers in it, I put in a shilling, just to show I bore no malice, looking the while into her soft brown eyes, and saying:

"The youngster quite deserved all he got, and plenty more for coming priggish, but since it hurts your feelings to see him leathered, I'm sorry I happened to lay on to him."

When she saw that we really meant to give her the capful of coppers, a pretty little smile crept round the corners of her mouth, and she said in a voice that didn't sound as if it could be loud or cross:

"Thank you; thank you. I know he's a bad boy, but he sha'n't do it again, and, before I go, would any of you like to have your fortunes told?"

Of course there were a dozen ready for that sort of joke—me among the rest, and she made us, each in our turn, hold out both hands, which she looked at, and then told us a lot of stuff about fair women, and dark women, and strokes of luck bad and good. She gave me my turn last of all, for I hung back a bit on purpose, watching her, and thinking, that though her

ways might be odd, her face, and her voice, and the way she moved about, were sweet and beautiful. When she looked into my hands, I felt as if I'd give a week's wage to hear something nice and kind, and no doubt my face told tales of me, for Preston Joe called out:

"Now, lass, go ahead; let's hear what's in store for Billy the roperunner, to pay him out for strapping yon rascal!"

And another said:

"Surely, lass, you can't read a fortune in those black paws of Billy's?" for you know navvies will have their bit of a joke, and you should have heard them laugh when she looked up at me and said:

"You will love a woman very dearly, and you will do your best to win her—failing that to serve her—but she will hold you to be of so small account that she will not heed your love; also, before long, you will have a great sorrow, and look on much trouble."

Now, though every man there laughed and said that I'd brought it all on myself with being too ready with the strap, to me her words seemed a real reading of what was writ in my future, though I called myself all the fools in creation for giving serious heed to such folly.

I don't know how much longer we should have stood there—gangers and all—never thinking that dinner-time was over, and that we had somewhat else to do beside listen to a pretty girl's nonsense, if we hadn't been called to the rightabout by Tommy Trot, the timekeeper, who came along with his book and his pencil in his hand, and Mr. Arthur, our agent, close behind him. The men didn't wait to hear all that Trot had to say about them for idling on such a nice fine day, they sloped off to where their picks and shovels lay, and began to make up for lost time. Mr. Arthur walked straight up to the gipsy-girl, meaning, no doubt, to remind her that "no admission except on business" was writ up on our works. A fine, well-favoured young man was this Mr. Arthur, not very tall, but well-knit, with a fair face, and bright, curly hair. He had a free and kindly way with him, which you could see in his eyes before he spoke. I had a great fancy for Mr. Arthur. I often used to think that if I'd been born a gentleman instead of a poor working-man, I should like to be just such another as he was. I knew that he wouldn't be rough on the girl, and, no doubt, she being a

woman, which is a sharp-sighted kind of creature, was aware of his good-nature at a glance, for instead of making herself scarce, as she would have been obligated to if Trot had taken her in hand, she looked up into his face with a smile.

"Now then, my girl," he said, smiling back, "what's your name, and what's your business?"

"My name's Hester Welsh," she spoke up; "and my business is to tell your fortune, sir."

"Don't you be so sure of that," he answered in a joking sort of way. "I'm too busy for that sort of thing; so you'd better clear off, and mind you don't come humbugging with these silly navvies any more in working-time."

But she wasn't going until she'd gained her point.

"You'd better let me see your palm," she said, in a coaxing sort of way. "It won't take long, and who knows what secrets the poor gipsy may not find written there?"

I can't recollect all that she said and he answered, but I know that her wilfulness got the better of his good-nature at last. She looked into his hand a sight longer than she had into ours, and as she looked the saucy smile died away from her face and left a puzzled expression there.

"Come, come," he said at last; "I can't wait any longer. Tell me quick when my ship is coming in, and let me go about my business until it does."

I saw her start at the sound of his voice, as if he'd woke her up out of a kind of dream, and she raised her eyes to his with such a pitiful, pleading look, that I could have sworn there were tears in them.

"It is hard to read," she said in a low, sad voice. "I see what is written there as if through a mist. Two women will love you, and you will wed the one who loves you least. More I may not tell you. You will remember my words when next the dead leaves are floating on the river below, for then the doom written in your palms will have worked itself out."

With that she was gone, leaving Mr. Arthur looking a little foolish at having given way to her fancy, and me with a hot and cold feeling about my cheeks, and a silly longing inside me to run after her, and look into her saucy bright eyes again.

However, it wasn't much use to long, or

anything else just then, except to mind the trucks we'd got to take on up the line to the tip-heap in the Calder Rough. So I put the thought of her out of my head—that is, in so far as I could. I tried to keep my wits from wool-gathering, for fear of cashalties, which are always ready for the unwary, and when the remembrance of her pretty face came uppermost, very obstinate like, I promised myself that, as soon as I'd done work and smartened up, I'd go and have another try at getting my fortune told.

So, after supper, I took my way to the little rough, one-storeyed cottage in the lane leading on to the down where I knew the gipsy family lived. It wasn't much of a place to look at from the outside, and the inside was still less recommendable, being, for neatness and cleanness, about as badly off as possible.

The door stood open. When I reached it I saw Hester Welsh and her mother sitting inside, tying up bunches of prim-roses. They both had their laps full, and the young imp of a boy was putting the bunches they had made into baskets lined with wet moss, all ready for taking into Carchester next morning. The house-place, miserable and dirty as it was, seemed full of flowers, and there was no sound within, while the two women bent their faces over their lapfuls of soft yellow bloom. The lad was first to see me, and when he had made out who I was—which took a long look, because of the difference engine-grime makes to a man's features—he signified his remembrance by a screech of: "La, it's yon engine-man!" and was gone like a shot. The women naturally looked up, and I saw a half-scared look cross Hester's face, which she tried to pass off with a saucy laugh.

"Come to have your fortune told over again, I suppose?" she said.

As for me, I'd never given another thought to the lad until I saw that look of fear in her face, so I said:

"Yes; the fortune you told me had no head nor tail in it; so, now I've got the black off, I've come to see if you can read it a bit plainer."

"It's hard to read the lines in a smart young fellow's hand," said Mrs. Welsh; "it takes a silver key to unlock the secret, you know."

I saw at a glance what sort of a body she was, so I said:

"All right, missus; we'll make it straight between us when——"

"No—no," interrupted Hester; "I can spell your hand without a key. You shut up, mother, and get on with the primroses, while I see what I can before it gets darker."

Her mother scowled and grumbled, at which the girl took no notice. She threw down her flowers, and coming outside as if to get more light, she said very softly, as she looked into my hand:

"You ain't going to set the police on him, or anything like that, are you? I'll promise to keep him away from your things another time, if you won't say any more about it—to her or to anyone. You hit him very hard, you know."

"Don't you think a month in the House of Correction would do him good?" I asked, just to see what she'd say.

"Good Heavens! you wouldn't be so hard on him or on me. Why, what should I do without him? It'd break my heart for such a thing to happen!"

It seemed odd to think of her caring so much for the young scamp; but what was odder still, from that moment the lad was kind o' precious to me myself. I'd give him my dinner willingly on the hungriest day—which I did many times—for no other reason than to do good to something she set her heart on. So when she begged for him, seeing that I had never meant to make a row about the matter, I said:

"You've got a very tender heart, and I sha'n't go for to make it sore. Let bygones be bygones, and you can give me a bunch of primroses just to show we're friends. Nextly, what about my fortune-telling?"

Of that question she took no notice.

"Who was that gentleman," she asked, "who came to send me about my business this afternoon?"

I told her, and then she asked me a lot of things about Mr. Arthur, more than I had a mind to answer—for I hadn't come there to talk about him; and so, as soon as I could change the subject, I did. Soon her mother's voice came out short and sharp:

"Now then, Hester, how much longer are you going to stand gossiping there? How do you think I'm to do all this lot of primroses alone?"

She turned round quick to go, and I could see that she was a bit frightened of her mother by the way she made haste.

"What about my flowers?" I asked.

"He wants a few primroses," she said, going into the house.

"All right; there's plenty here. They're a penny a bunch, or you can take four bunches for threepence."

But while I was feeling for a copper in my pocket—seeing that the woman meant to make something by my visit—Hester caught up a handful anyhow, heads and tails, and gave them to me.

"Good night," she said; "it's all right."

And so I went away, sorting out my primroses, but remembering all the while that Hester's head had been much too full of Mr. Arthur and of Jacky to leave room for any thoughts of me, except in so far as I was mixed up with one or the other of them. Yet notwithstanding the small encouragement I had had, I was only bent on going again and again.

Now I shouldn't like to make my story too long by telling how many, many times I went in the evening to that dirty thatched cottage, where Hester Welsh lived with her mother and young Jacky, and how I never got much speech with her, partly because her mother was nearly always there, and partly because of a saucy, stand-off way the girl had at such times as I found her alone. Sometimes I thought we were quite good friends, and I felt happy accordin'; more times it seemed as if she didn't care a straw whether I came or stayed away, and then all the world looked black.

Perhaps some wiseacre may call me a fool for being in such trouble of mind to get into the good graces of a wild gipsy-girl, for I was a respectable working-man, earning pretty well two pounds a week, and there was more than one nice, tidy girl, as I hinted before, who looked pleasant at me, and would have taken my arm on Sundays, if I'd been so minded as to ask. But I've noticed that it isn't only babies in arms who cry after the moon at the bottom of a pail of water, and I suppose Hester Welsh in this case stood for the moon, to me, the baby. And, contrariwise, anyone might have thought that a poor girl like her, who got her living by telling fortunes, which is nothing but telling lies, and by selling flowers, which means tramping the country to pick them, and trapesing the streets to sell them, would have snapped at the chance of a steady, respectable husband. At least that's what I thought at first; but later on I began to see that I

wasn't in it at all, and that, though every now and then she did show me a bit of favour, there had been no hope for me from the minute I had first set my heart on her.

I kept my eyes shut as long as I could, and my ears too—for more than one of our mates, who knew where I went courting, would try to cure me with a bit of unwelcome information. But shirk the blow how I would, it had got to come, just as if I'd been hurt, and was bound to have my leg off without any choice in the matter.

And this was how and where it fell on me. Did I happen to mention a while ago that when our line had got a mile or two beyond St. Martin's Hill it went across a sort of common, called Calder Rough, where there was woodland, and open spaces, and little brooklets running between soft waving sedges, and a wonderful lot of wild-flowers growing here, there, and everywhere? Some folks said that our works were spoiling the beauty of this wild bit of country; but that, in course, is merely a matter of opinion; to my mind, a well-made railroad is as handsome a thing to look at as need be seen, and an ornament to any landscape. Moreover, we should be mortal bad off without railroads. So, considering the benefit they are to all folk—rich and poor alike—why should anyone find fault with them for changing the face of the country a bit? It's quite beyond me to think how any man can look on a fine piece of engineering without feeling full of pride and pleasure, to see how the hands of his fellow-creeturs have cut a way for him through all sorts of impossible places.

But there, I'm leaving the rails altogether, so I'd better reverse my talking machine, and go back to the place where I said that our line ran through Calder Rough. We had to make an embankment here, for which purpose we were running up the stuff that was excavated from St. Martin's Hill. I can't tell you how I used to plot and contrive for our engine to be out there at dinner-time. More than once I made a mistake on purpose with the waggons, and hindered us from running back just before twelve, and this was because Hester Welsh used to come up there to find the flowers she sold about Carchester streets. Such days as I knew or guessed she would be there, I would take my Tommy in my hand and go wandering about

all my dinner-hour, in hopes I should light upon her among the trees or in the hollows, where the violets grew thick. I don't suppose I caught sight of her more than twice or thrice out of all the times I sought her; but that didn't dishearten me. I made up my mind, every time I was disappointed, that I should have better luck next time. And so the days wore on until the beginning of June. The primroses and daffodils were over, but the wood was full of cowslips, and, judging from the quantities that Hester and her mother made up into bunches in the evenings (while I stood by the open door trying to win a chance smile), it seemed that cowslips must be very fashionable in Carchester. For I've heard that fine folk have fashions in flowers just as they have in headgear, and dinner-time, and such like.

And now to come to my finding out how little chance I had with Hester, which seems a hard matter to bring to the telling point; and, indeed, it is, though across all the years that have passed, myself of to-day sees another man in the self of those days.

One bright morning, when I had brought dinner-time and Calder Rough together, with a very hopeful heart I left the engine, taking a chunk of cold pie in my hand, just as the clock told twelve. I felt certain sure—wherefore I cannot say—that I should meet with Hester that day. Accordingly I was so light-hearted that I sung as I went, and jumped over the fallen trees in my path as if I'd been a young urchin coming home from school instead of a grown man going courting. And, as I went, I spied in a green hollow that had once been a chalk-pit some very fine cowslips. "Let's have 'em," I said to myself; "it'll be something to give her when I come up with her." So I went down between the overhanging banks, and plucked my hands full. As I gathered I heard the voice I was always hearken-ing for in the distance. There was no likelihood of me making a mistake about that voice. I could have picked it out of a thousand. I wondered whether it was her mother or Jacky who was with her—most likely Jacky. But then, what made her voice sound so soft and serious, if she was only speaking to that imp of a boy? I'm telling the plain truth about myself, without trying to make myself out more perfecter than I really am, and so I'll just confess that I made myself small under the bank, and waited to hear what

would be the sound of the voice that answered her. A wild, cruel thought; a remembrance of many words and hints, that turned me from hot to cold and back again; made me strain to catch her words, but I could not. Closer and closer they came—Hester and whoever was her companion, and still there had been no sound of that other voice. Yes, there it was—just a couple of words; but they came and went so quick that my head, which was all swimming with a feeling I had never felt before, couldn't take in anything of it.

Then they had passed, and I heard Hester's voice growing fainter and fainter as they walked away. And me—I crept from my hiding, full of fear, yet scarce knowing why and what I feared, sick at heart with the thought of what I felt I was going to learn, to where I could see down the slope. And there I saw Hester bidding good-bye to a man who had his arm round her in a careless sort of way, while her head lay on his breast as if it was her rightful resting-place. I watched them while they stood so for a few minutes—he bending over her and speaking, which I could not and did not desire to overhear—what I saw told me more than enough. Then she lifted her face suddenly to his, and flinging both her arms round his neck, clung to him as if she could never let him go.

When it came to that, I let myself fall on my knees, and, crouching down, I

covered my eyes, and shut out the sight of her love and his love-making. My heart was sick with more than jealousy—for the man who was walking and talking with her in that sweet, lonely place, and who I seemed to know by instinct was only doing it to pass away an idle hour, was no other than Mr. Arthur, the man I had looked up to as long as I had known him.

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